

IN THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) Method for producing steel products (1) with optimum surface quality, such as automobile skin sheet or sheet for welded pipes, especially with ultralow carbon contents (ULC or IF steel), nitrogen contents, total oxygen contents, high-strength and/or stainless steel grades, in each case by melting (2) on the basis of an electric arc furnace (2b) and treatment in a ladle metallurgy installation (3), after which the steel is continuously cast (4) into a thin slab (5a) in the continuous casting mold (14), descaled, partially deformed, cut into partial strand lengths (15), generally descaled (28), heated to rolling temperature and homogenized in a soaking furnace (16), generally descaled again and rolled in a finishing mill (6a), coiled in a first coiling station (20) immediately downstream of the last finishing stand (19) or, alternatively, downstream of a cooling line (21), and the final microstructure (9) is adjusted in a cooling line (21) according to the desired grade of steel by cooling on a runout table (22), and the rolled product (1a) is generally finish-coiled in a second coiling station (23), ~~or, alternatively, downstream of a cooling line (21), and the final microstructure (9) is adjusted in a cooling line (21) according to the desired grade of steel by cooling on a runout table (22), and the rolled product (1a) is generally finish-coiled in a~~

~~second coiling station (23), characterized by the fact that~~ wherein the molten steel (1b) is produced in a process route (10, 100; 12; 13) that is selected according to the desired final microstructure (9),

(a) by producing molten steel (1b) in a melting installation (2a), which is not a steelworks converter, by a vacuum degassing system (27), and in a ladle furnace (25), or

(b) by melting in an electric arc furnace (2b) or in a CONARC double furnace, in a ladle furnace (25) with an electrode system (31), and in a vacuum degassing system, or

(c) by melting in an electric arc furnace installation (35) or a CONARC double furnace (30) or an individual furnace vessel (30), in a ladle furnace (25), and in a differential-pressure vacuum degassing system (43), or

(d) by melting in an electric arc furnace (2b) with additions of alloying materials (26), a partial-quantity degassing in the ladle furnace (25), or a vacuum degassing system (27) and a ladle degassing (27).

2. (Currently Amended) Method in accordance with Claim 1, ~~characterized by the fact that~~ wherein successive treatment steps (24) are carried out as a first process route (10)

- in an electric arc furnace (2b) and
- in a ladle metallurgy installation (3)

-- with at least one vacuum degassing system (27) followed by a ladle furnace (25) for decarbonization, reduction, and addition of alloying materials (26), and

-- with a ladle furnace (25) for slag formation, for slag work, for temperature control, for final adjustment of the final analysis, and for purity rinsing to Δ <Al> contents.

3. (Currently Amended) Method in accordance with Claim 1, ~~characterized by the fact that~~ wherein successive treatment steps (24) are carried out as the second process route (11)

- in an electric arc furnace (2b) or an electric arc furnace installation (35) and

- in a ladle metallurgy installation (3)

-- with a ladle furnace (25) for slag formation

⇒ for the heating

⇒ and for the prereduction (FeMnHC) of the steel

-- with a vacuum degassing system (27)

⇒ for the decarbonization and denitrogenation

⇒ for the reduction of the slag on the steel surface

⇒ for the desulfurization under reduced pressure,

⇒ for the final adjustment of the final analysis and

⇒ for the purity rinsing to Δ <Al> under atmospheric

pressure.

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4. (Currently Amended) Method in accordance with Claim 1,
~~characterized by the fact that~~ wherein successive treatment steps
(24) are carried out as the third process route (12)

- in an electric arc furnace (2b) or in an electric arc furnace
installation (35) and

- in a ladle metallurgy installation (3)

-- with a ladle furnace (25)

⇒ for temperature control and

⇒ for prereduction (FeMnHC)

-- with at least one differential-pressure degassing process
(43) for the decarbonization, desulfurization and denitrogen-ation,
reduction, and addition of alloying materials from an iron alloy, and
with final adjustment of the final analysis and

⇒ for the purity rinsing to <Al> contents < 15 ppm bound
aluminum (Al_2O_3).

5. (Currently Amended) Method in accordance with Claim 1,
~~characterized by the fact that~~ wherein successive treatment steps
(24) are carried out as the fourth process route (13)

- in an electric arc furnace (2b) or in an electric arc furnace
installation (35) and

• in a ladle metallurgy installation (3) with a ladle furnace (25) for temperature control and a subsequent partial-quantity degassing (27a) for decarbonization and denitrogenation, desulfurization, with a ladle degassing (27) for the final adjustment of the final analysis and for purity rinsing to Δ <Al> contents.

6. (Currently Amended) Method in accordance with Claim 1, ~~characterized by the fact that~~ wherein a descaling (28) is carried out directly below the continuous casting mold (14).

7. (Currently Amended) Method in accordance with Claim 1, ~~characterized by the fact that~~ wherein a controlled high-temperature oxidation (29) by a controlled atmosphere is carried out in the soaking furnace (16).

8. (Currently Amended) Method in accordance with ~~Claim 1 or Claim 7,~~ ~~characterized by the fact that~~ Claim 1, wherein the partial strand lengths (15) are inductively heated downstream of the soaking furnace (16).

9. (Currently Amended) Method in accordance with Claim 1, ~~characterized by the fact that~~ wherein the partial strand lengths (15) are subjected to controlled cooling upstream of the first finishing stand (17) of the finishing mill (6a).

10. (Currently Amended) Method in accordance with Claim 1, ~~characterized by the fact that~~ wherein continuous product (1c) coiled in the second coiling station (23) is subjected to controlled cooling.

11. (Currently Amended) Method in accordance with ~~any of Claims 1 to 5,~~ ~~characterized by the fact that~~ Claim 1, wherein the electric arc furnace installation (35) comprises two furnace vessels (30), which are alternately operated with a swiveled electrode system (31) and an oppositely swiveled top injection lance (32), are operated with pig iron, direct reduced charge materials, and scrap, and are operated partially with electric power and/or chemical energy.

12. (Currently Amended) Method in accordance with ~~any of Claims 1 to 11,~~ ~~characterized by the fact that~~ Claim 1, wherein steels with multiphase microstructure (dual-phase steel 33 or TRIP steel 34) are produced.

13. (Currently Amended) Installation for producing steel products (1) with optimum surface quality, such as automobile skin sheet or sheet for welded pipes, especially with ultralow carbon contents (ULC or IF steel), nitrogen contents, total oxygen contents,

high-strength and/or stainless steel grades, using a melting installation (2a), a ladle metallurgy installation (3), a continuous casting machine (4a) for slabs (5) or thin slabs (5a), a shear (38), a descaling system (28a), a soaking furnace (16), a finishing mill (6a), a runout table (22), and a first coiling station (20) and second coiling station (23), ~~characterized by the fact that~~ wherein the melting installation (2a) consists of an electric arc furnace installation (35) with a ladle metallurgy installation (3) that is downstream with respect to the material flow (36); by the fact that the continuous casting machine (4a) is provided with a continuous casting mold (14) in thin-slab format (5a); with a vacuum degassing system (27), a ladle furnace (25), a CONARC double furnace, with a ladle furnace (25), which has an electrode system (31), and a vacuum degassing system (27), a differential-pressure vacuum degassing system (43), and a system for partial-quantity degassing in the ladle furnace (25).

14. (Currently Amended) Installation in accordance with Claim 13, ~~characterized by the fact that~~ wherein a descaling system (28a) is provided in the continuous casting machine (4a) directly below the continuous casting mold (14).

15. (Currently Amended) Installation in accordance with Claim 13, ~~characterized by the fact that~~ wherein in addition to a descaling system (28a) downstream of the continuous casting mold (14) and a descaling system (28a) downstream of the shear (38), an additional descaling system (28a) is provided upstream of the first rolling stand (17) of the finishing mill (6a).

16. (Currently Amended) Installation in accordance with Claim 13, ~~characterized by the fact that~~ wherein a liquid core reduction line (40) or a soft reduction line (41) is arranged upstream of the shear (38) in the containment roll stand (39) of the continuous casting machine (4a).

17. (Currently Amended) Installation in accordance with Claim 13, ~~characterized by the fact that~~ wherein the continuous casting mold (14) is designed as a continuous casting mold with a pouring gate.

18. (Currently Amended) Installation in accordance with Claim 13, ~~characterized by the fact that~~ wherein an inductive heating installation (42) is provided in the material flow (36) between the soaking furnace (16) and the first rolling stand (17) of the finishing mill (6a) or the descaling system (28a).

19. (Currently Amended) Installation in accordance with ~~any of~~
~~Claims 13 to 15, characterized by the fact that~~ Claim 13, wherein the
cooling line (21) comprises a laminar cooling line (21a) combined
with several intensive cooling boxes (21b).